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Final Project Proposal

For my final project, I would like to critique a particular company's public relations or crisis communications campaign. Specifically, I would like to critique BP's crisis communication plan during the case of the Gulf oil spill that happened in April of 2010. It has been widely covered and I have grazed the surface in the past about what happened public relations wise, but I have always been interested in looking into it much deeper. I think if I look into this crisis communication plan, or lack thereof, with an analytical eye, it could greatly help with seeing exactly everything that a company should *not* do in a time of crisis. BP did not handle the situation well at all for multiple different reasons, as they fell for trick questions, did not sound empathetic at all, and were rather selfish and placed the blame on people other than themselves during the crisis.

In order to do my research on this topic, I plan on viewing a multitude of different platforms. I plan on viewing past news reports regarding the topic, and interviews featuring employees from BP and potentially other companies that were involved in the spill that BP attempted to place the blame on. I also plan on utilizing journal articles that discuss the overall opinions of the public and how they feel that BP handled the spill. I know a large majority of people find that they did not communicate effectively at all. This is in regard to the timing of their comments, along with the actual content of their comments. They did not answer questions effectively and instead of admitting that they did not know something, they answered either ambiguously or incorrectly. I want to research why they felt that this was a validated way to handle these issues, and if there was a public relations team at hand, who was this team composed of and what were their thought processes?

The BP oil spill is tied to Organizational Communication because, as I mentioned before, it is essentially every way a company should not communicate and handle a communications crisis. The company failed to communicate effectively internally, and this is evident as they appeared it would be appropriate to have their CEO speak about how he wanted things to go back to normal. This completely lacks any empathy and sounds extremely selfish of the company to release to the press. Due to situations like this and others, BP also failed to communicate to the public effectively during their crisis.

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